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WOMEN'S STATE IN SOCIETY AND THEIR STRUGGLES TO OVERCOME THE PROBLEMS FROM THE SHORT STORIES OF NEELAM SAXENA CHANDRA

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1. Introduction

The present study attempts to analyse and criticise the short stories of Neelam Saxena Chandra. This study covers her short stories regarding the status of women and the struggle of them to overcome their problems.

Literature is an art form, or any single writing deemed to have artistic or intellectual value, often due to deploying language in ways that differ from ordinary usage. Its Latin root literatura/litteratura (derived itself from littera: letter or handwriting) was used to refer to all written accounts, though contemporary definitions extend the term to include texts that are spoken or sung (oral literature). Literature can be classified according to whether it is fiction or non-fiction and whether it is poetry or prose; it can be further distinguished according to major forms such as the novel, short story or drama; and works are often categorized according to historical periods or their adherence to certain aesthetic features or expectations.

Indian English literature now occupies an important place among English and other literatures of the world. Its short stories have attracted the widespread interest all around the world. The Indian English short story writers are the writers of origin living in different countries of the world are now recognized among the literary jewels of the world of literature. The Indian story in English, though a late corner in the literary scene, exhibits an astonishing range of subject matter and a wide variety of techniques. Though often considered a derivative of its western counterpart, it is not a hot –house plant but manifests a striking resemblance in its genius to the story written in any Indian language. (Dwivedi 1997)

A short story is fictional work of prose that is shorter in length than a novel. In contemporary fiction, a short story can range from 1,000 to 20,000 words. Because of the shorter length, a short story usually focuses on one plot, one main character (with a few additional minor characters), and one central theme, whereas a novel can tackle multiple plots and themes, with a variety of prominent characters. Short stories also lend themselves more to experimentation that is, using uncommon prose styles or literary devices to tell the story. Such uncommon styles or devices might get tedious and downright annoying, in a novel, but they may work well in a short story

2. Literature Survey:

Neelam Saxena Chandra completed her Engineering in Electronics & Power Engineering from V.N.I.T., Nagpur and went on to finish PG Dip in I.M & HRD and PG Dip in Finance Mgmt. At present, she is working for the Indian Railways. She shares from an incurable passion of writing poetry and fiction. Around six hundred of her stories/poems have been published in various leading Indian as well as international magazines, anthologies and journals. Awards - Awarded by Children Book Trust, India in 2009. Awarded by eminent poet/lyricist Gulzarji in a Poetry Contest organized by American Society on the topic 'Poetry for Social Change'. Awarded Premchand Puraskar by Ministry of Railways (II prize). Neelam also debuted as a lyricist in Shankar Tucker's composition MERE SAJAN.

List of poems and gazals ; Can I Have This Chance (2014), Soul Seekers (2013), Rishtey Mohabbat Ke (2013), Pankhudiyan (2013), Layers of Flickering Lights (2013), Silhouette of Reflections (2013),Skylines (2014), The Purple Moon (2014), Hues of Love, Treacherous Lady, Tales from Sundervan, Chanda, Five tales, Winter Shall Fade (2015), Her Story: Is not always a Story (2015), Zindagi Ki Kalam Se (2014), As a beginner for a beginning, Geet Gaata Chal, Casket of Stories (2015), Pluck out the heart, Asha Ke Pankh (2015), Preet Pakhi (2015), Dil Se (2015), Sands of Time (2015), Transcending Hearts (2015), Tales of Eon (2015), TavishikeTaare (2015), TitliyonkeLokmein (2015), Rambha (2015),Tanke Hain Kuch Sitare (2016), Bulbule Khayalon Ke (2016), Rajjo, Rano Aur Surajmukhi (2016), Mai Hawa Ho Gayee Hu (2016), Butterflies of Hope (2016), Kataraney Zindagi Ki (2016), Saptrangi Pari Evam Rang Birangi Kahaniyaa (2016), Stella (2016), In the Flickering of an Eye (2017), The Soul Unbound (2017), Trove of Musings (2017), Main Bahane Lagi Hun (2017), Maine Rang Diye Alfaaz (2017), Maine Tarashe hain Alfaaz (2017), Rangi Main Tere Rang Mein (2017), Ek Sahar Ummid Bhari (2017), Zindagi ka Alaav (2017), Ek Shama hardam jalti hai (2017), Aaj baadal ban baras jaanaa hai (2017), Misty Moments (2017),A Princess, A goal and a mole (2017)

3. Objectives:

For this research work the following objectives are put forth

1. To understand how the women characters are influenced by the society.

2. To critically analyse the social problems of Indian women like poverty, untouchability, the psychological analysis of modern characters, illiteracy of characters, social vices and customs, etc.
3. To critically examine an important role of short stories among the readers to spread an appealing message to the society. To focus the new challenging problems of modern Indian women in society
4. To study the various elements women struggle in the short stories of Neelam Saxena Chandra
5. To study and critically evaluate the writer's style and the art of storytelling.
6. To bring into light the other aspects of the horror genre by doing a deep study of the works of Neelam Saxena Chandra

4. Hypothesis:

1. Women represented in the short-stories are the victims of orthodox social structure
2. Rising consciousness towards selfhood through education is quite essential in Women writers
3. Economic freedom and education empower women to take decision in society
4. Job and career gives women boldness, contentment and self- realisation

5. Research Methodology:

The proposed study intends to interpret and evaluate the primary texts by using various issues; perspectives and ideologies feminism explored in Indian women writers. Hence, the research is descriptive and interpretative in nature

The research methodology is to be adopted for said research work would be descriptive, analytical and critical in nature with the help of various printed and electronic platforms. The best possible primary and secondary sources will be critically analysed to understand and interpret the research topic and its objectives. The methodology is to be used as per the MLA style book. Besides all guidelines are to be followed relating to their research.

6. Justification Of Research:

The proposed research attempts to consult all the source materials on feminist short stories of India. For the collection and organization of the research material, the researcher intends to visit different libraries and consult the experts in the field to get better perspectives

in shaping the ideas. In addition to this the material related to the present research will be collected from the related books, journals, articles, research works and online journals.

7. Proposed Chapter Scheme:

Chapter –I

Introduction:

The first chapter of the proposed research work note the brief account of women state and livings, customs and traditions and its reflections in contemporary literature. This chapter will be a quest for interpretations of social, educational, political, and religious dimensions of women.

Chapter –II

Lines of Fate: First Love and Other Stories

Often a simple encounter on the path of life can change one's entire future. "Lines of Fate" by **Neelam Saxena Chandra** is a collection of such selected, distinctive and unique tales from different walks of life. She has come with this unique collection of short stories to entertain the readers. When a dice is rolled, one does not know what the outcome will be. Similarly, in an encounter between people, the aftermath is simply indefinite and unidentifiable. Maybe, the lines of fate decide the final outcome. Twists and turns are a part and parcel of each of these stories, written in simple, easy-to-read and lucid language.

Lines of fate is a collection of short stories. Written in lucid language, the book emphasizes on human emotions which are relatable. Stories are short and concise with a narration that is engaging and keeps the reader hooked to the book. Each story is loaded with

unexpected twists and the unpredictable climax is the highlight of each story.

Chapter –III

Tales from Venus

"A woman is a palette of hues and has various shades to her persona. She desires nothing, but love. If she feels loved, she shines, opens her wings and touches the sky; radiating the whole world. If she does not, she cribs for some time, may get angry too; but then finds her own horizons in the space provided. She does not stop anywhere. She is always adapting to the situations and then also modifying herself accordingly and learning to grow in the worst of situations. Tales from Venus makes you aware of the various colours of a woman right from teens till she matures. There are tales that tickle your bones, tales that make you feel emotional, tales of courage, tales of treachery, tales that thrill you and tales that make you happy. Ultimately, you are bound to remain glued to the book because of the surprise element offered by each story."

Tales from Venus' is a short story collection but with a rider. All the twenty odd stories have been written around Indian women. With a foreword by Ashok Sajjanhar, himself a writer and career diplomat, the stories in this collection are set in Indian family life. The two dozen odd tales are pretty engaging, not because they are written from a feminist perspective, but for their positive approach. Robust optimism is what the characters in her stories display.

As Neelam herself says, “Indian women have to pass through various vicissitudes of life, and for them living is another name of hackneyed existence”. Justifiably, many of the stories in the anthology depicts some kind of tribulation Indian women face in their daily life .While some stories have hilarity in them, some are purely contemplative in nature.

Characters in the stories are drawn from ordinary situations and that makes the reader acquaint himself of the realities of middle class life. Lucidly written and with a knock-on effect, the stories have elements of emotion, courage and pettiness. When an interviewer asked her sometime back being a woman of substance, what is her philosophy of life, her reply was: “I don’t plan too much since things never follow a straight line pattern, they are mostly curvilinear. I live in the present and enjoy every moment as if there is no tomorrow”. The present volume of short stories follows that archetype rather conscientiously.

Chapter –IV

Casket of Stories

Everyone lives. But life becomes a pleasant journey if you come across something that is called love. Love is not only about romance. It is something more than that. The feeling of love and affection can arise from your child, from your parents, from your colleagues and from your friends. Only if life were easy! Life is the most complicated thing one ever comes across. Life is all about relationships, which never follow a mathematical or geometrical pattern. Sometimes, the one who you felt loved you, turns out to be a traitor. And love may come from the most unexpected corner. It is these twists and turns that make the twenty-one stories in this book.

Chapter –V

Skylines

A woman is like a palette of colours. Just like the colours, she too displays a different tint and shade at different points of time. The colours you perceive are the ones you make her show. If you love her, she will adore you; if you give her wings she will soar but if you hurt her, she may take time but will one day bounce back in retaliation.

'Skylines' is a collection of fourteen different stories which revolve around women - the buoyant teens, the chirpy youth or the matured ladies. Different encounters and circumstances in life make them either very tender, fragile or reactionaries and bigots. The specific aspect of this compilation of thirteen power packed stories of womanhood. Identifying this work as a book or a compilation will not be justified towards the effort put in by the author by choosing this theme and giving it this pristine treatment.

I quote – this is an introduction to womanhood – it is being a woman!

She being a grounded and self-made personality is the perfect crafter of the words and the fabricator of different shades of a woman. You all might be thinking, as to since time immemorial, the feminine gender has been given various and numerous introductions and countless names so what is so unusual about this kind of introduction to womanhood? Well, it is about the craft of storytelling technique. No powerful script is effective enough unless and until it is presented in an acceptable and impactful manner.

Chapter –VI

Sands of Time

Sands of Time is a collection of very interesting stories with varied themes revolving around the central character, the women. The author has beautifully depicted the women in these varieties of stories, metaphorically comparing her to water. Characterisation has been very real which imprints a picture in the minds of the reader. There is a perfect blending of various themes by the author. Simple style of writing with good diction is worth appreciating.

In "Pursuit of a Suitable Guy", the confusion of Siya regarding her choice of life partner has been portrayed well. I liked the character of Puneet, a real gentleman, who accompanies Siya in the process of selection of her life partner, despite being in love with her. "Another

Chance" is another interesting story which depicts a very strong character Rabiya, who refuses to marry an elderly person who is her parents' choice and face all the consequences very bravely. I also admire the character, Wasim, who helps Rabiya to regain strength by educating her and providing her with a job. Characterisation is excellent. The "Return of the Daughter" showcases the helplessness of being born as a daughter, where parents consider daughters to be a burden on them and wish to marry them off to get rid of them. However, in this story, Sonalika, the daughter is courageous enough to return back to parents' house and lead her life.

In "Sand Clock", Kavya, a childless woman, has taken the bold step of adopting a child and solving marital problems created by her husband. All the stories are knitted well with the harsh realities of life faced by women, even in this era of women empowerment. The stories keep the readers engrossed throughout.

Chapter –VI

Conclusion

This chapter intends to sum up the arguments of earlier chapters and will ultimately come to a certain conclusion on the basis of said short stories.

8. Bibliography:

A) **Primary sources**:

All original text of the author will be referred for proposed study

1. Lines of Fate: First Love and Other Stories
2. Skylines
3. Tales from Venus

4. Casket of Stories
5. Sands Of Time

B) Secondary Sources:

The secondary data will be gathered form varied platforms like books, research paper, newspapers, interviews, articles, journals, government reports, reviews, web materials etc. Further the sources will be traced attending national and international level conferences and seminars.

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Research Guide

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